

K. C., A.B.
The HARDSHIP and DANGER of
SUBSCRIPTIONS, represented, *698. c 12*
10

IN A
LETTER

TO THE
Reverend Dr. POWELL,

With REMARKS upon his SERMON,

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY of *Cambridge*,

ON THE

Commencement *Sunday*, 1757.

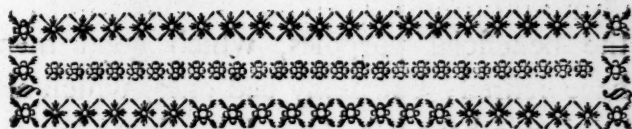
Et refellere sine pertinaciâ, & refelli sine iracundiâ, parati sumus.
Cic. Tuf. Qu.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. WAUGH, at the *Turk's-Head*, in
Lombard-Street; and W. FENNER, at the *Angel*
and *Bible*, in *Paternoster-Row*. 1758.

[Price Sixpence.]





THE
HARDSHIP and DANGER
OF
SUBSCRIPTIONS, represented, &c.

Reverend SIR,

***** T is no part of my intention, to
* I * deprive you, of any reputation,
***** which your sermon, in defence
of the *subscriptions*, required in the *church*
of *England*, may really deserve ; but only
to propose to your consideration, the reasons,
which have hindered my concurrence with
you, in the opinions, which you have offer-
ed to the public.

The *subscriptions*, required in the *church*
of *England*, have occasioned many warm
contests, among *protestants* ; and it will be
readily owned, that they have not answered

4 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

the beneficial purposes, which good men have desired; but many bad ones, which all good men have been sorry for. Some honest and learned men, well qualified for the ministry, have been obliged to refuse compliance with the terms of admission into the *church of England*; others, by compliance, have been filled with very uneasy reflexions. Some, it is to be feared, have been tempted, by worldly motives, to *subscribe*, without being convinced of the truth of the *articles*; whilst others, who have *subscribed*, once and again, have learnedly confuted many of the doctrinal propositions; to the truth of which, they had given their public and solemn assent.

These are inconveniences, attending *subscriptions*, which every sensible, and honest man would be glad to see removed. And it may well be questioned, if it would not have been for the advantage of the Christian Church, if the *imposition* of subscriptions had never been thought of. However, Sir, as your sentiments and mine, upon this subject, are very different, I have taken the liberty to make some remarks upon your
sermon;

sermon; and to offer them to your consideration, and to the candor of the public.

Your discourse is introduced with an observation, which perhaps I do not well understand. For you say, p. 5.—“ *It is, usually, of more importance to the peace and happiness of a community, that it's members should speak, than think, alike. For they, who have learned to confess their faith, in the same form, will consider each other, as friends; even though they should disagree, not a little, in their explanations of it; while such, as have been accustomed to different expressions, can seldom be convinced, that their opinions are the same.*”

As it is the duty of all men to speak truly, or agreeably to their real thoughts, I cannot see how the members of any community can *speak* alike; unless they also *think* alike. It is of no importance to the public peace and happiness, for men to *speak words*, which have no meaning. For this is just the same, as if they did not speak at all; and such unmeaning words, like those of a parrot, or jackdaw, can be of no moment to society.

6 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

society. How then can it, *usually*, be of more importance to the community, that it's members should speak, than think, alike? If they speak with truth, they must speak, as they think. And, if they do not think alike, neither ought they to speak alike. And, therefore, I cannot see how it is possible, for honest and understanding persons, to confess their faith, in the same form of words, whilst their faith itself is various: nor, that the same words, without the same meaning, can have any tendency to promote concord, among people, who are not willing to be imposed upon, by sounds; but choose to speak the *truth*, themselves; and to hear it from others.

In the same page, you tell us — “ *The wisest and best friends of our religious establishment have long wished, that all the protestants, in this kingdom, could be united, by a consent to the same liturgy, and the same articles of faith.*” You add very well — “ *Not a consent, forced, or feigned; but given freely, and sincerely; notwithstanding some small difference of sentiments, about points of speculation, or ceremonies.*” I
must

must own, Sir, I cannot perceive, that such an universal consent is possible; unless all the protestants, in the kingdom, thought, and judged, alike, of the *liturgy*, and *articles of faith*. You disclaim a forced, or feigned, assent. For that would be hypocritical: and yet wish for a consent, given freely and sincerely. How can this be possible? The *protestants* of this nation have different capacities, and opportunities. Some are more, others less, diligent, in acquiring religious knowlege; and some have more and stronger prejudices than others. And, consequently, their sentiments will vary, not a little, but a great deal; not only about small points of speculation, or ceremonies; but about the most important and essential doctrines of our holy religion. This fully appears, from all past history; and that it will ever be so, whilst protestants have different capacities, opportunities, prejudices, &c. is extremely probable. This consent, so long wished for, by the wisest and best friends of the establishment, is quite impossible. But there is another kind of consent; *namely*, to love one another, notwithstanding our difference of sentiments. This, we can hardly wish for,
with

8 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

with too much earnestness. Nor, indeed, would a consent of opinion and judgement, if possible to be universally attained, produce more virtue and happiness, than the present, wise constitution of heaven; by which every *protestant* is left to judge, and understand, for himself, in the best manner he can.

Your reflexion upon the *dissenters*, page 6. is, I apprehend, too severe; for you say—
“*They have been rendered obstinate, in matters perfectly insignificant.*” If these insignificant matters are such, as you have enumerated, page 8.—“*Whether Luke the physician was, also, the evangelist? Whether the rules for finding Easter are perfectly consistent? Whether the titles, given to a saint, or a king, properly belong to them? or whether the pope, or the council, is to be preferred, in fixing the time for a festival?*—These matters are, certainly, insignificant enough. But these, Sir, are not the matters, concerning which, the *dissenters* can be charged with *obstinacy*; if a word of so harsh a meaning is to be used at all. There are other matters, about which, *dissenters* have disputed; and these, undoubtedly,

undoubtedly, are of no small importance; and well deserve the attention of all *protestants*; and especially of those, who impose, or countenance, a *subscription to human compositions*; viz. “ Whether *Jesus Christ* is
“ not the sole lawgiver, in his own Church?
“ Whether kings, or parliaments, or convocations, or assemblies of divines, can require
“ subscriptions to forms of human device,
“ without usurping upon *Christ’s* authority,
“ and invading the rights of that Lordship, or
“ Dominion, to which, his God and Father
“ has exalted him? Whether it is not the
“ duty of all christians to stand fast in the
“ liberty of the gospel, and steadily to maintain their right and privilege, to judge, for
“ themselves? Whether it is not the true
“ protestant principle, that the *Bible* is a sufficient, and the only, standard of our faith?
“ and, if it be sufficient, and the only standard,
“ whether it is not presumptuous to impose
“ the *thirty-nine articles*, or any other human
“ formularies of faith; which have been various; and, in many particulars, inconsistent
“ with each other, and with the holy Scriptures themselves? And lastly, whether it
“ is wisely done, to invent so many distinctions, and refinements, to qualify a *sub-*
B *scription*;

10 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

“ *scription*; and to make it fit easy upon a
 “ doubting conscience; — which, perhaps,
 “ after all the arts of palliation, will remain
 “ unsatisfied, and fearful?” These appear
 to be matters of real importance. And, if
dissenters are not willing to give them up, I
 hope, Sir, you will not think them *obstinate*;
 but rather approve their disinterested firm-
 ness, in adhering to, what they think, im-
 portant truths: and especially, as their firm-
 ness, in this respect, has been, and is, at-
 tended with the loss of many worldly
 emoluments, and advantages; to which
 a *subscription* would have opened them
 the way.

You are also of opinion, page 6. that,
 notwithstanding a subscription is required to
 the thirty-nine articles, — “ *Great liberty is*
 “ *left, for a difference of judgements, in mat-*
 “ *ters, either not plain, or not important?*”
 But how can great liberty, or any liberty,
 be left, when the avowed design of im-
 posing this subscription was to avoid a di-
 versity of opinions, in matters of faith? Or
 how can you hope, that this liberty, which
 is left by the articles, is so extensive, as to
 take in every man, “ *whose principles are*
 “ *not*

"not destructive of the church, or nation."
 The *Bible* contains such an extensive standard, but as for the *articles*, they are much too narrow, and were enjoined with a design to avoid, but not to allow, a diversity of opinions; much less to allow such a diversity, as to take in every man, whose principles are not of the most destructive malignity.

In page 7. you say — *"I will not enter here, into any debate with those, who, calling themselves servants of Jesus Christ, and members of the catholic church, assert their freedom from all human impositions; (I wish you had not added) and will not submit to any terms of communion; like him, who refused to be made a citizen of Athens, because he was already a citizen of the world."*

There are many, who may be called the *servants of Jesus Christ*, with the greatest propriety, who think it their duty to assert their freedom from all human impositions. But I know of none, who refuse to submit to any terms of communion. The *dissenters*, if you mean them, are ready to submit to every term of communion, in-

12 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

joined by the *gospel*; and do submit to the particular times, and places, agreed upon, by the congregations, with whom they join, in public worship. How then could you persuade yourself to say — “*Should a man adhere to this principle, he could never join in any public worship.*” What do you mean, Sir, by *this principle*? If you mean the principle of asserting their freedom from all human impositions, we have thousands of *protestants*, who constantly join in the public worship. But, if you mean, as I suppose, you mean, the principle of not submitting to any terms of communion, I know no such persons. However, if you had the *dissenters* in view, you might very well have spared your jest, as they have no likeness to him, who refused to be made a citizen at *Athens*; (perhaps, there might have been a little resemblance, if he had refused to be made a *slave*, at *Athens*) because he was already a citizen of the world. You go on to observe — “*Not only the times, and places, and ceremonies, of public worship, but the words also, must either be appointed, by common consent, or chosen by him, who presides in each congregation.*” The times,
and

and places, and other circumstances; relating to public worship, are appointed, among the *dissenters*, by common consent, or custom; nor would it be any objection to me, if the prayers also (provided they were rational and agreeable to the Scriptures) were appointed, in like manner; but the words of these are generally chosen by him, who presides in the congregation. What then? You say, — “*That conscience must be strangely perverse, which can submit to the directions of a single person, and not to the authority of the public.*” Certainly the point to be considered, is, which of the two is best, and most agreeable to the intentions of public worship. If the single person directs a form of devotion, preferable to that, enjoined by the authority of the public, that conscience must be strangely perverse indeed, which refuses to approve it, because it is of private direction; and even to prefer it to any enjoined by public authority, which appeared, to him, to be less adapted to serve the purposes of worship. Many *dissenters* have no objection to a *liturgy*, provided it be agreeable to the Scriptures; but, as you say, — “*If it requires*

14 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

" *quires him* [the person, who officiates, and
" *I add, or any other person]* *to profess doc-*
" *trines, which he does not believe; or if he*
" *judges either the whole, or it's principal*
" *parts, to be vain, trifling, or superstitious;*
" *his assent will be sinful.*" And you own, if
sincerity forbids the use of this service, this
is a sufficient reason not to use it. These
concessions are extremely just. And,
upon these accounts, the *dissenters* think
themselves entirely justified, in their re-
fusals of the *public liturgy*. You tell us,
page 8. "*The assent is given to the use, not*
" *the truth, of the liturgy:*"—But how can
a person honestly assent to the *use* of forms,
which he thinks are not *true*? You add—
" *This assent cannot be understood, to extend*
" *farther, than to an approbation of the doc-*
" *trines, which it openly professes; or with*
" *which, it has an evident and necessary con-*
" *nexion.*" But how can an honest *clergy-*
man, who believes the scripture-doctrine of
the trinity, approve the scholastic, unscrip-
tural, and Athanasian doctrines, which it
openly professes? Or how can those ap-
prove the *calvinistic* doctrines, interwoven
with the *liturgy*, who are so far from be-
lieving

believing them to be true, that they have abundantly confuted them, and shewn them to be false? The law then, which requires an *assent*, suppose it would be contented with an *approbation*, leaves an unsurmountable obstacle, in the way of those, who are unable to *approve*, or to *pretend to approve*, doctrines, which they believe to be erroneous.

It is our duty to perform all our public adorations, with sincerity, and purity of heart, as in the presence of the great searcher of hearts. And, though we are unable to attain to absolute perfection, it certainly becomes us to reject whatever is untrue, trifling, or superstitious. For these are defects, which will justify our refusal to *use*, or *approve*, them. What then do you mean, page 9. where you say, — “*even in the holy scripture itself, some portions have been thought less proper to be publicly read.*” Very true, — “*and yet no christian will scruple to declare, that it is profitable for reproof, for exhortation, for instruction in righteousness.*” And then you draw the following inference, — “*why then is the liturgy to be rejected, for*
“*want*

16 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

“*want of that imaginary perfection, which no book, not even the book of God, has ever obtained?—*” Surely! the cases are very different. For those portions of *scripture*, not usually read in public, are not rejected, nor reckoned, by any, to be imperfections in the *book of God*. But the *liturgy* is rejected; because it openly professes doctrines, which are believed to be contrary to the holy scriptures; it is not rejected for the want of an imaginary perfection, never to be obtained; but for the want of an agreement with the christian rule, which might be attained; if, instead of excusing it's defects, there was but an equal zeal to reform them.

But it may be replied, as you immediately add, —“*that the difficulties arise, not from the want of some supposed excellency, but from real blemishes; from blemishes, which have been observed long ago, and their remedies proposed.*”— But have these remedies been ever effectually applied? Have not almost all alterations been refused, in every past attempt to heal our differences? And are not the most material objections against the *liturgy* still in full force? You then ask, even sup-
posing

posing some blemishes, — “ *Is there in our
“ liturgy any absurdity, so glaring, as to be vi-
“ sible to every eye? Is there any impiety so mons-
“ trous, as to shock every devout worshipper?*”

Admit there is not; for it is not easy to say how glaring an absurdity must be, to have this effect. It is but too evident, that many, from custom, prejudice, or inattention, are reconciled to very great absurdities, and even to very shocking impieties. But, surely, an absurdity should be removed, and a defect reformed; though visible only to a few, and not to every eye: and it is certainly true, that many things, which have escaped the vulgar observation, do, notwithstanding, call aloud for reformation. You then represent the complaints of your most scrupulous adversaries — “ *as chiefly relating to those ap-
“ pointments, in which there was the great-
“ est room for a difference in men’s judgement,
“ or fancy:*” Such as the length, and divisions of the service — what passages of scripture ought to be intermixed — how often some important petitions may be repeated — “ *these, and such as these, you say,
“ are the matters in controversy.*” If so,

C

your

18 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

your most scrupulous adversaries might very soon be made easy. But I must tell you, Sir, there are many other matters, of much greater importance, which have been, and still are, the subjects of controversy. Do not your public prayers inculcate the belief of the *athanasian* trinity? Are not some of your solemn petitions addressed to God the Son; others to God the holy Ghost, and others to the holy, blessed, and glorious trinity, three persons and one God? Is not the plan of *Calvinism* intermixed with your forms? Will not these be matters of controversy, as long as they remain unaltered? And do not these deserve the attention of every thinking man, of every devout worshipper? In comparison with these, how insignificant are the points you have mentioned? Kneeling, or standing; a surplice, or black coat, — how trifling? And yet, even in these little things, if we can change, not for the worse, but for the better, it will surely be a point of wisdom; because trifles should not be rendered important, by making them unalterable. And, therefore, I should think, *that, in matters of this sort, nothing*

thing is so plainly wrong, as a refusal to change for the better.

You intimate, page 10. that matters in dispute are to be determined, by public authority, — “ *and that, if one man assumes to himself this determination, every man might claim, with equal reason; and which, if every man should exercise, all united worship must totally cease:*” — But this consequence can, by no means, follow. For, the *dissenters* claim, and exercise, this very power, of determining, for themselves, points in dispute. And yet it is well known, that all united worship is so far from totally ceasing among them, that they associate, for this purpose, constantly and cordially; tho’ their sentiments vary in many points.

You inform us, page 11. — “ *it is not a condition of union, in our church, that even our ministers should acknowledge every thing, in the public service, to be exactly what is best and fittest.*” But, if any parts of your service contain what is wrong, and unfit, how hard is it to oblige your ministers to

20 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

profess — “ *that in their minds they assent to, and will follow, in their practice, the prescribed forms of prayer* ” — when many of these prescribed-forms contain particulars, to which they cannot assent, in their minds, nor follow, in their practice, without occasioning to themselves uneasy, and perhaps unconquerable, scruples. Of this, some clergymen have publicly complained, in very pathetic, and affecting terms; and have dutifully petitioned for relief; — but hitherto in vain!

As for the *articles* of religion, to the consideration of which, you next proceed, you say — “ *they are not merely articles of peace. They are designed also as a test of our opinions.* ” Can *protestants* have a better test than the *bible*? What authority have any men to invent, and impose, another? Were our reformers, were the compilers of the articles, or those, who imposed them, infallible? Is there not great presumption, and want of modesty, in men’s assuming a power to judge for others; and for all succeeding ages, in matters of the greatest import-

importance to every particular christian? What pity is it, that your *church* has so long countenanced this *assumed* power; and suffered her *clergy* to be at the trouble of contriving so many subtle distinctions, to reconcile their sentiments, with that solemn declaration of their faith, which they must express, in words, whose original, literal, and obvious meaning is quite contrary to their real, and avowed belief?

You observe — “*that he, who assents to our articles, must have examined them, and be convinced of their truth.*” But do not many of your *clergy*, notwithstanding all this assent, examination, and conviction, openly disbelieve, and confute, the *articles*? This is an untoward appearance, in your *church*. However you attempt to qualify, and vindicate, it, thus; — “*There are rules of interpretation, peculiar to these writings, [viz. the articles] as the design of interpreting them is peculiar.*” Very peculiar are these rules of interpretation indeed! If, as you say, — *we are not concerned to discover what was meant by the writers, but what*
“*will*

22 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

"will be understood by the readers." Did not the writers draw up these *articles*, with a design to avoid a diversity of opinions, among those, who are admitted to officiate in your *church*? And, if this was their design, as well as of the *act*, which enjoins *subscription*, this original intention will be totally lost, if ministers *subscribe* them, in divers senses; and venture to depart from what was meant, by the writers, to that sense, which may be understood by the readers. If this lax method of interpretation is once allowed, there may be the greatest diversity of opinions, notwithstanding all the care of the compilers, and imposers. And, if *subscription* is now become useless, and ineffectual, as undoubtedly it is, to the prevention of a diversity of opinions, how much is the continuance of this practice to be lamented; especially as it is very ensnaring, and grievous to many good men?

In page 12. you ask the following questions, — *"If our articles are to be thus explained, will they not be rendered uncertain,*
"tain,

tain, and useless, by a variety of inconsistent senses?" Undoubtedly, they will! — *"Where shall we fix the standard of public opinion?"* In the bible, the true christian, and protestant standard. — *"Will not every whimsical interpreter find some followers, &c?"* To which you have answered — *"with out doubt, the method proposed admits some variety of interpretations. And what other does not?"* The articles, then, are plainly incumbered with insuperable inconveniences. And one would think, it would be much better, for your church, to get fairly rid of them, and to adhere to the bible, which confessedly contains the true religion of protestants. The bible is of a generous, and large compass; and will comprehend every honest man. Which must be pleasing to all persons of liberal, and candid minds; who prefer the honour of religion, and the virtue and happiness of society, to the narrow and mercenary views of a worldly interest.

You tell us, — *"that, wherever an article is expressed, in such general terms, as*
" will

24 A LETTER, to the Reverend

“ will fairly contain several particular opinions; there, certainly, it is sufficient for him, who subscribes, to be convinced, that some one of those opinions is true.” But I must ask, can the opinions, contained in any of the articles, agree with the sentiments of those clergymen, who disbelieve the *athanasian* trinity, and embrace the scripture doctrine? Or can those, who reject the *calvinistic* interpretations, find sentiments, in the *articles*, favourable to their notions, concerning the divine perfections, the grace of the gospel, and human liberty? You take notice, “ that it has been said, that a latitude of expression was chosen, on purpose to admit, within the pale of the church, men of various, and even opposite, principles.” But certainly, they were mistaken, in saying thus; because the compilers of the articles intended to avoid a diversity of opinions. And, therefore, they would not choose any latitude of expression, which would defeat their grand intention; nor had they any design to admit, within the pale of the church, men of various and even opposite opinions; when it was their declared

declared purpose, to avoid a diversity of opinions; and to establish consent, touching true religion.

You observe, page 13. — “*Custom can take away the force of expressions, or give them a new meaning. And where the original sense is one, the received another, the subscriber is at liberty to use them in either.*” This liberty then, I must observe again, will intirely destroy the very end, for which the *articles* were compiled. And therefore, your *church* would be better, without them. How many good men, in your church, are made uneasy, by their *subscriptions*? How many are incapable of any farther preferment, though deserving of the highest; because they dare not repeat a practice, which has already given them so much disquiet?

But to proceed, if the subscriber may choose the original sense, or the received; the sense of the writers, or of the readers; (all which you allow) will not this bring down the articles to no fixed sense, or to no sense at all; however, to no real use? Insignificant, then, are all such *subscriptions*.

D

And

26 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

And I cannot but wish, again, and again, that they were quite taken away. Then there would be full scope for the honest and faithful, the inquisitive, and ingenious, in this happy age of liberty and learning, to carry on their noble improvements, in religious, and critical, knowlege; without being any longer cramped, and discouraged, by the narrow and illiberal limits, so presumptuously fixed, by our mistaken ancestors, who had so little critical skill in the study of the holy Scriptures. — Then honest and pious men, though of different sentiments, would cordially unite, in christian love, and good-will, to one another; and sound knowlege, diffusive, god-like charity, and pure and undefiled religion would flourish abundantly, under the auspicious smiles of heaven-born liberty. Then the *church of England* would be honourably distinguished, above all the churches of the earth, as the bulwark of the reformation; and the glory of the christian church: — which can never be, whilst the narrow and peevish measures of imposition are permitted to cramp the noblest spirits, within your pale; and to disgust the most candid, and inquisitive, without it. — Permit me then,

then, without offending, most devoutly to wish, that our numerous and learned *clergy*, who have imbibed, or acquired, generous notions of *christian truth and liberty*, would unite their utmost endeavours, not to gloss over, and palliate; but to discountenance and remove, all remaining defects and blemishes. Which, after all the softening arts, and most dexterous refinements, are grievous, and ensnaring, to many of the most respectable dignitaries, and ministers, in the establishment. — Unite, Gentlemen, in petitioning your superiors, who must be sensible, as well as you, that a farther reformation is still wanted. Unite, in every fair and honest, in every prudent and probable measure, to obtain this great blessing. But, if all your efforts should be vain, which God forbid; how much would it contribute to your honour; how much would it promote the virtue and religion of your country; bravely, but peaceably, to make a stand, and to give up your emoluments, your temporal advantages and dignities, rather than wound the peace of your own consciences, by subscriptions and professions, which contradict the inward persuasions of your minds. This would be glorious in-

28 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

deed; and convince, at once, the common enemies of religion, that the gospel was still the power of God, and the wisdom of God to Salvation. Your names would be recorded, in the annals of liberty. And (what is infinitely more) your short resignations and self-denial, here, would be rewarded, with the glory, which cometh from God, and which will endure for ever !

You add in page 15. — “ *The assent [to the articles] must be conceived to be given, with more solemnity, and exactness, by him, who professes to study every branch of religious knowledge, than by one engaged chiefly in other pursuits; by a man of mature judgement, than by a youth just beginning to exercise his reason.* ” — Whereas, the truth is; — The greatest proficients, in religious knowledge, will be embarrassed with the greatest and most numerous difficulties; and as for the young persons, they must have the fewest objections; because they know but little of the matter. However, it may very justly be objected, — “ *They have neither the age, nor the learning, necessary, to make them proper judges of such*

“*such abstruse points:*” and, if their weakness is not imposed upon, — “*They certainly assent, before they have thoroughly examined.*” How greatly would it be for the honour of our universities, and how much to the advantage and virtue of our youth, if this, and all such dangerous customs were utterly abolished? How can the instructors of youth expect, from them, a sacred regard to *truth*; when they are, thus early, accustomed to trifle with the *assent* required; and to promise, with solemnity, to adhere to a faith, which they have not examined, nor are capable of understanding? — This, Sir, is a very different thing from that, mentioned by you, of teaching children a *creed*; which, when arrived at years of consideration, if they do not understand, or believe, they can reject; because they are under no engagements to profess it, right or wrong. But the youth in our universities promise, and *subscribe* (and, in some colleges, do they not also swear?) to adhere stedfastly to the articles. And, if nothing more is meant by their *subscriptions*, than what you intimate, page 15. for God’s sake, use your influence, Sir, to deliver our youth from this early
and

30 *A LETTER, to the Reverend*

and dangerous custom of tampering with their consciences!

Upon the whole, the alterations, which so many friends of liberty and religion, earnestly wish for, are not recommended—
“*To accommodate the liturgy and articles to the prejudices of dissenters:*” — But to truth, conscience, and our common christianity. What! if there were no *dissenters* in the land? Are not truth and righteousness, peace and liberty, the easing scrupulous and tender consciences, in the church, things of the last importance? Are the clergy, no way concerned to make their own liturgy, more perfect? their own articles more agreeable to reason and scripture? *Dissenters* are thankful for, and happy in, their liberty; and many of them wish, that the ministers in the establishment were equally happy and free. They do not envy your honours and riches; but wish you would contrive any fair and reputable methods, to secure them to yourselves. And, when this point is gained, they wish, that, instead of defending your present, imperfect establishment, you would unite your counsels and endeavours, to settle
it

it in the nearest conformity to the holy Scriptures. Can any objections be urged against this reformation, which might not have been urged, with equal force, by the *papists*, against the changes, made by our first reformers? For God's sake, let us all then, both *churchmen* and *dissenters*, unite our honest and candid endeavours, to bring about this happy, and most desirable event. For, surely, no time was ever more favourable to such an attempt, than this age of learning, free enquiry, and rational forbearance; under the best of Kings, and the mildest administration, ever known.

To conclude: I most heartily wish, that all christians may pay a constant attention to the exhortation of our great apostle, in the words of your text, 1 COR. i. 10: *Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgement.* I most sincerely and heartily wish well to you, and to the rest of the clergy, to all christians, and to all mankind. And am, Reverend Sir,

Jan. 24, 1758. Your humble Servant. A B C

Books published by George Benson, D.D.

And sold by JAMES WAUGH, at the
Turk's-Head, in Lombard-street.

I. **T**HE history of the first planting of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION: taken from the acts of the apostles, and their epistles. Together with the remarkable facts of the *jewish* and *roman* history; which affected the christians, within this period. In three volumes, quarto. The second edition, carefully corrected, and with large additions. Price bound 17s.

II. A paraphrase and notes on six of the epistles of St. Paul, viz.

I *Thessalonians*, } *Timothy*, } *Titus*,
II *Thessalonians*, } *Philimon*, } II *Timothy*,

Attempted in imitation of Mr. *Locke's* manner. To which, are annexed, critical dissertations on several subjects, for the better understanding of St. *Paul's* epistles. The second edition, carefully corrected, with large additions, quarto. Price bound 17s.

III. A paraphrase and notes on the seven (commonly called) *catholic* epistles; quarto. viz.

St. *James*, } } II St. *Peter*, } } I, II, and III.
I St. *Peter*, } } St. *Jude*, } } Of St. *John*.

Attempted in imitation of Mr. *Locke's* manner; to which are annexed several critical dissertations. Price bound 17s

IV. The reasonableness of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION; as delivered in the scriptures. In four Parts. Part I. Contains the arguments for the truth of the christian religion. Part II. The answers to the difficulties and objections, proposed by the *anti-revelationists*. Part III. An interpretation of several texts, which they have perverted. Part IV. Appendix, or a Vindication of the preceding parts of the book. The second edition, octavo. Price stitched 4s. 6d.

